

ROCKY FLATS STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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Jefferson County -- Boulder County -- City and County of Broomfield -- City of Arvada -- City of Boulder
City of Golden -- City of Northglenn -- City of Westminster -- Town of Superior
League of Women Voters -- Rocky Flats Cold War Museum -- Rocky Flats Homesteaders
Arthur Widdowfield

Monthly Status Report – May 2010

Board meeting summary

There was no meeting this month

Legacy Management monthly site inspection summary

April site activities included:

- Routine inspections of the East Trenches Plume Treatment System (ETPTS) and Mound Site Plume Treatment System (MSPTS) were conducted and both treatment systems are functioning normally.
- System optimization is ongoing at the Solar Ponds Plume Treatment System (SPPTS) and water samples were collected to evaluate system performance.
- Continued 2nd quarter 2010 groundwater sampling, which included completion of quarterly sampling at the Present Landfill (PLF) and Original Landfill (OLF) groundwater wells.
- The monthly OLF inspection was completed.
- A non-routine inspection of the OLF was completed on April 12. Staff inspected Berms 1 and 7 and Seep 7. No new movement occurred over the weekend. The inspection frequency will be changed to weekly through the spring months.
- The OLF piezometer and inclinometer data were collected.
- Collected and processed automated surface water sample suites. Collected ambient grab samples from Walnut Creek. Discharged water from Ponds A-3 (to A-4), A-4 and B-5. Pre-discharge water quality met all required standards. Required RFLMA sampling was conducted during the duration of the A-4 and B-5 discharges and met all standards.
- Several locations where vegetation is sparse were inter-seeded.
- Completed planting bare-root plant materials at various locations and seeded the Xcel gas line. Weed barrier was placed around some of the bare-root plant materials that were planted to see if this increases the survival rates by reducing competition from other plants.
- Mechanical control of Scotch thistle began at locations where rosettes are present. Wetland mitigation water level monitoring was conducted
- Evaluated active owl nest near SPPTS. Mom and baby owl seem to be doing well.
- Completed Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse inspections.

- The B-ponds road and ETPTS parking area had 80 tons of ¾-inch angular rock added and spread to a depth of approximately 2 inches. The additional rock will help stabilize the areas following precipitation events.
- Evaluated erosion control areas after a heavier than normal precipitation event; began repairs at several locations. Repairs to erosion controls located in several areas of the site were completed. Damage to the site erosion controls was caused by the approximately 3-inch rain event.

Site Document Update

Contact Record 2010-05: Statistically Higher Concentrations of Analytes in Groundwater Downgradient of the Original Landfill (OLF) and Present Landfill (PLF)

On May 10th, DOE posted on its website a new contact record, “Statistically Higher Concentrations of Analytes in Groundwater Downgradient of the Original Landfill (OLF) and Present Landfill (PLF).”

According to the contact record, “Groundwater at the PLF is monitored quarterly in three upgradient and three downgradient Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) wells. Groundwater at the OLF is monitored quarterly in one upgradient and three downgradient RCRA wells. RCRA well water quality is evaluated in accordance with the decision flowchart presented in RFLMA Attachment 2, Figure 10, “RCRA Wells.” Concentrations in downgradient wells “are evaluated to determine if the concentrations are significantly higher than those in the upgradient wells. Concentrations in downgradient wells are also evaluated to determine if there is a statistically significant increasing trend. If concentrations are statistically higher in downgradient wells than in upgradient wells, or if downgradient wells show statistically significant increasing concentration trends, consultation regarding the appropriate response is required.”

DOE reports that “significantly higher downgradient concentrations and increasing trends were observed for some analytes.” DOE and CDPHE consulted about the results on March 29, 2010. The parties determined that these constituents were below RFLMA Attachment 2 Table 1 standards, or for uranium below the groundwater threshold value.” The parties agreed that the appropriate response is to continue monitoring RCRA wells in accordance with RFLMA.

The contact record can be found at: http://www.lm.doe.gov/Rocky_Flats/ContactRecords.aspx

Dam Breach EA Public Meeting

In April, DOE released for public comment an Environmental Assessment (EA) for breaching five dams. The public comment period closes June 1, 2010. DOE hosted a public meeting in Broomfield on May 18th.

As background, in 2009, DOE breached Dams A-1 and A-2 (located in North Walnut Creek) and Dams B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-4 (located in South Walnut Creek). DOE is now proposing to breach the five remaining Rocky Flats Site dams: A-3 and A-4 (in North Walnut Creek), B-5 (in South Walnut Creek), C-2 (at the end of the South Interceptor Ditch north of Woman Creek), and the Present Landfill (PLF) Dam (in No Name Gulch).

At the May 18th meeting, DOE identified four primary reasons for breaching the dams:

1. Ecological benefits

2. Dam safety (B-5 is of primary concern)
3. Maintenance and operation costs
4. Evaporative depletion (by breaching dams A-4 and B-5, DOE would no longer need to account for the evaporative losses to Broomfield)

Community members, including local government representatives, raised a number of issues and concerns. Some included

1. While the ponds are not part of the CERCLA remedy – which means DOE does not have to maintain them in order to meet its regulatory obligations – the ponds help settle any contaminants that might flow downstream. Settling provides increased assurance that Broomfield’s Great Western Reservoir will be protected. The ponds also help ensure that contaminated water will not flow into the Woman Creek Reservoir¹, the 1996 project that protects Westminster and Northglenn’s drinking water, among others.
2. DOE plans to breach C-2 in 2010-2011. Lost in some of the public dialogue about breaching ponds A-4 and B-5 is the fact that DOE will not breach them until 2015, at the earliest. Instead, they plan to operate these two ponds in a flow-through condition and to monitor the impacts. As DOE notes, a flow-through condition should mimic the water levels once the ponds are breached. That will help DOE establish wetlands, and develop ecological conditions DOE would find once the dams are breached. One question that has emerged is why not first manage C-2 in a flow-through condition.
3. Once the dams are breached, should water quality exceed any applicable standard, DOE does not have a contingency plan to stop contaminated water from flowing downstream. Managing these dams for some time in a flow-through condition maintains a contingency plan should DOE determine through sampling that contaminated water is moving downstream, either into the Refuge and/or off-site. Breaching the dams eliminates the option of retaining water should monitoring detect a problem.
4. DOE has yet answered the question of why it needs to breach C-2 in 2010-2011. It has also not identified how the data garnered from managing A-4 and B-5 in a flow-through will be used to determine whether to breach these two dams.

The EA can be found at: http://www.lm.doe.gov/Rocky_Flats/Sites.aspx?view=5

Stewardship Council update:

Next meetings: June 7, September 13 (2nd Monday), November 8th (2nd Monday)

¹ In 1996 the hydrological connection between Rocky Flats and Standley Lake was severed. That means, even if plutonium or some other contaminant flowed off site, municipal water supplies served by Standley Lake would be protected. Woman Creek Reservoir, which was built to capture water flowing downstream in Woman Creek, helps ensure supplies are protected.